

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY REGARDING PRIMERO DE MARZO PLOT

REF: STATE 58541

1. FOLLOWING IS CURRENT SUMMARY OF PRIMERO DE MARZO PLOT PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL.

2. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL REPORT, THE PRIMERO DE MARZO PLOT FIRST CAME TO LIGHT WHEN JORGE ZAVALA ESQUIVEL WAS SHOT BY THE POLICE EARLY MORNING JANUARY 12, 1978. FOLLOWING THIS, THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION IN THE HOUSE ZAVALA WAS OCCUPYING. THIS OCCURRED WHEN POLICE OPENED A TRUNK CONTAINING EXPLOSIVE MATERIAL WHILE SEARCHING THE HOUSE. THE EXPLOSION INJURED THREE POLICEMEN AND RUINED THE HOUSE.

3. FROM THE MATERIALS THEY FOUND IN THIS HOUSE, THE POLICE CLAIMED THEY HAD UNCOVERED A SUBVERSIVE GROUP WHICH CALLED ITSELF PRIMERO DE MARZO. ACCORDING TO THE POLICE, THIS WAS, IN REALITY, AN EFFORT TO REVIVE AND REVITALIZE THE SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZACION POLITICO-MILITAR (OPM) WHICH HAD BEEN BROKEN UP DURING FIGHTING AND MASS ARRESTS IN THE SPRING OF 1976.

4. PICTURE OF SEVEN PERSONS, FIVE WOMEN AND TWO MEN, WERE PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPERS WITH REWARDS OFFERED FOR INFORMATION.
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TION LEADING TO THEIR ARREST IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRIMERO DE MARZO CASE. TWO OF THE WOMEN WERE UNNAMED AND THEIR PICTURES WERE WITHDRAWN. THE REMAINDER WERE ALL PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN SOUGHT BY THE POLICE SINCE 1976 FOR CONNECTIONS WITH THE OPM THE TWO MEN REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN LIVING OUTSIDE PARAGUAY SINCE 1976. TWO OF THE WOMEN HAVE SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM IN FOREIGN EMBASSIES. THE WHEREABOUTS

OF THE OTHER PERSON, NIDIA GONZALEZ TALAVERA, THE WIDOW
OF AN OPM LEADER WHO WAS KILLED IN AN ENCOUNTER WITH SECURITY
FORCES IN 1976, IS UNKNOWN.

5. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT, AT ANY ONE TIME OVER THE PAST
SEVERAL WEEKS, BETWEEN TWENTY AND FORTY PERSONS HAVE UNDER-
GONE POLICE QUESTIONING RELATED TO THE PRIMERO DE MARZO PLOT.
MOST OF THESE PERSONS HAVE BEEN RELEASED AFTER BEING HELD
A FEW DAYS. FIVE PERSONS HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE
JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES FOR CRIMINAL PROCESSING. FOUR OF
THESE ARE ACCUSED OF GIVING REFUGE TO NIDIA GONZALEZ
TALAVERA AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER OVER THE PAST EIGHTEEN
MONTHS. ONE, DR. CARLOS ARESTIVO, A PSYCHIATRIST, IS
RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN BADLY BEATEN WHILE IN
POLICE CUSTODY AND COULD LOSE HIS SIGHT AS A RESULT.
THE REMAINING PERSON IS A PARAGUAYAN MEDICAL STUDENT
WHO IS ACCUSED OF RECRUITING ADHERENTS FOR THE OPM/PRIMERO DE
MARZO ORGANIZATION.

6. IT APPEARS PLAUSIBLE THAT THERE WAS A REMNANT OF THE
SUBVERSIVE OPM GROUP THAT WAS REORGANIZING UNDER THE NAME
PRIMERO DE MARZO, AND THAT JORGE ZAVALA COULD HAVE BEEN
LEADER OF BOTH THE OPM AND THE PRIMERO DE MARZO. HOWEVER,
WHATEVER THREAT THIS GROUP MAY HAVE REPRESENTED SEEMS TO HAVE
BEEN GREATLY OVER-EXAGGERATED BY THE POLICE. 8. FACT, DISCREPANCIES
IN POLICE ACCOUNTS OF THE SHOOT-OUT WITH ZAVALA AND THE EXPLOSION
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IN HIS HOUSE HAVE LED MANY OBSERVERS BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE
GOVERNMENT TO SUSPECT THAT THE EVENT MAY HAVE BEEN STAGED BY
THE INVESTIGATIONS POLICE. THIS, BOTH TO DISTRACT
ATTENTION FROM THE ARRESTS OF CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONISTS IN
DECEMBER WHICH HAD AROUSED INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM, AND TO
KEEP ALIVE THE CLAIM THAT THERE EXISTS AN EVER-PRESENT, SERIOUS,
SUBVERSIVE LEFTIST THREAT TO PARAGUAY. THESE DOUBTS HAVE BEEN
REINFORCED BY THE ABSENCE OF ANY FOLLOW-ON LARGE-SCALE ARRESTS
OF SUSPECTED ADHERENTS OF THE PRIMERO DE MARZO ORGANIZATION.
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